

Chicago releases updated comprehensive plan

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Dive Brief:

- The Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) has released an updated long-term, comprehensive regional plan, ON TO 2050. The plan builds on concepts in the region's first comprehensive plan, GO TO 2040, which was released in 2010 and updated in 2014.
- The plan outlines CMAP's intended investments and regional priorities for transportation, development, the economy and the environment, among other issues. Three guiding principles informed all of the recommendations in the plan: inclusive growth, resilience and prioritized investments.
- Speakers at the ON TO 2050 launch event repeatedly stressed the importance of creating opportunities and improvements for all residents, especially in neighborhoods suffering from divestment or under-investment.

Dive Insight:

Speakers at the launch event noted that the seven-county Chicagoland area has undergone a lot of changes in the last decade, but in some regards, progress has stalled. ON TO 2050 aims to re-spark widespread progress and economic growth.

A theme underlying all aspects of the plan is to take deliberate steps toward inclusive growth and provide more investment in underserved communities. Chicago suffers from notable segregation and leaders take heat for inequity and inequality in service and resource distribution throughout the sprawling metro region. "Unfortunately in our region there is tremendous inequality, which is one of the things that drags our growth," said Toni Preckwinkle, president of the Cook County Board of Commissioners. Speakers expressed that equity helps to fuel thorough, long-lasting prosperity throughout the entire region.

A prime focus in the comprehensive plan is investment in transportation and aging infrastructure to improve residents' mobility. Speakers drew correlations between residents' ability to advance in society and their transportation accessibility and mobility. ON TO 2050 puts a lot of importance on achieving a well-integrated, multimodal transportation system through upgrades and expansion.

Again, the transportation aspect integrates the broader goal of targeting underserved communities. Mayor Rahm Emanuel highlighted what he calls recent "tremendous investments in transit, roads and bike lanes." He mentioned the \$2.3 billion red line rail extension that will bring subway access to many underserved South Side neighborhoods. The city also launched a dockless bike-share pilot program this year exclusively in far South Side neighborhoods.

At the comprehensive plan launch event, Emanuel further stressed the importance of transportation during his call for Illinois legislators to pass a transportation bill, vowing that if state lawmakers don't pass one by May 2019, CMAP would devise its own. "It's essential for economic growth and jobs," Emanuel said. "The livelihood, economy [and] quality of life in this area — the citizens we represent — are dependent on it."

Earlier this year, representatives from CMAP spoke with Smart Cities Dive about Chicago's electric vehicle future and the city's push for city and transit fleet electrification. They noted how mobility and resilience, especially through innovative transportation, are integral parts of the ON TO 2050 plan. Advances are intended to improve mobility while also helping the environment, despite the host of challenges with innovating in the transportation space. "One of the challenges of long-range planning is to anticipate what's going to come down the road, especially as technology keeps changing," Elizabeth Irvin, transportation planner for CMAP, told Smart Cities Dive.

ON TO 2050's goal of boosting Chicago's resilience also includes strategies for adapting to the changing economy and helping residents transition to new types of jobs in the evolving workforce. While still looking toward innovation and technology for future development, leaders also want to maintain the region's diverse jobs base and not completely convert the economy to a tech-centric one. Continuing education and new job training, for example, can help the workforce adapt to current and future challenges.

[ON TO 2050](#) ↗

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